

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

In literature, symbols hold important role in helping to deliver the meaning or message of the author to the readers whether it is expressed or implied. Therefore understanding the symbols help readers to know and understand the meaning of the message even though the context is hidden in the story. Many writers use symbols in their story. One of them is Toni Morrison.

Toni Morrison is one of the most powerful American authors. She has created many phenomenal works like; *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977) and *Beloved* (1987). Morrison is widely known to put an epic, heart-touching and strong characterization in her novel. She has won several awards in literature such as Pulitzer Prize and American Book Award in 1988 and Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993.

Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved*, is inspired by a true story of an African American slave, Margaret Garner, who escaped with her husband from Kentucky to Ohio in 1856. This novel tells about Sethe, a slave and her daughter Denver who escaped from slavery. Their house, 124 Bluestone Road, Cincinnati is haunted by a ghost that Sethe believed as her deceased daughter, which she called Beloved. This novel not only tells about Sethe and Denver, but also tells how other characters such as Halle, Schoolteacher, Amy Denver, Paul D, and Baby Suggs play an important role in this novel. Sethe and her fellow slave's struggle to escape from slavery and inequities are narrated in exquisite language by Morrison.

Even though the novel is well-known as a historical novel contains narrative about the life of the black people's history of slavery in the United States, yet this research wants to focus on different issue. It is found that the main character's struggle to escape from slavery is more interesting since it involves many archetypal symbols. It is assumed that the symbols appear in this novel give a big impact in the reader's understanding of the main character's journey. It is believed that the main character's journey leads to a process of self-purification. Purify means to free (someone) from guilt or evil thoughts. Based on this word, self-purification in this novel can be concluded as a process that is going through to purify herself from negative thoughts in order to help herself healed and become a new person. Therefore, the research intends to investigate those archetypal symbols in order to understand Sethe's journey as a process of self-purification thoroughly. It is believed that comprehending Sethe's journey of self-purification will also help the reader to feel the experience of self-purification itself. Thus, this research is conducted under the title "Archetypal Images and the Journey to Self-Purification in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*."

1.2 The Identification of Problems

Sethe as the main character in this novel has experienced many events in her life especially when she is trying to escape from slavery. There are many archetypal symbols involved in the main character's journey. Without comprehending those archetypal symbols, the readers will fail to understand Sethe's journey of self-purification from her traumatic past and mistakes. Therefore, understanding the archetypal symbols is crucial.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

The research focuses the analysis on explaining the archetypal symbols that appear in the novel and how each symbols deepen people's understanding of Sethe's journey to heal herself from the trauma of slavery and to comprehend her process of self-purification. This research is basically an intrinsic analysis because it focuses only on the archetypal symbols involved in main character's journey and the roles of the symbols in strengthening the theme.

1.4 The Research Questions

This research will answer the following questions:

1. What are the archetypal symbols that appear in Sethe's journey and what are the meaning of those symbols?
2. How do these symbols give meaning to Sethe's journey to get her self-purification from traumatic past and sins?

1.5 The Objectives of the Research

The objective of the research is to find the meaning of the archetypal symbols in Sethe's journey. Not only to find the meaning of the symbols, but this research also reveals that through the archetypal symbols, Morrison indicates the main character's self-purification. From the main character's experience, people who get the same experiences may learn how to forgive themselves and how to restart a better life.

1.6 The Review of Related Studies

This novel has been discussed by some researchers from many perspectives. It is found three researches that help to conduct this research. First, a

research that is conducted by Gengqing Chen & Weiwei Wang (2014) in an article entitled “Metaphorical Analysis of the Image of Water in *Beloved*”. It discusses about the existence of water in Morrison’s *Beloved*. They choose three elements that consist of water; water itself, rain and river. In their article, they more focus about metaphoric perspective and metaphorical language. They argue that water represents the memory of the main character, rain represents the emancipation and river represents the history. This article helps in giving basic understanding of meaning of water as metaphorical symbol. They conclude that metaphorical language (in Metaphorical Conceptual Theory, metaphoric are related to everyday life and water is part of everyday life) helps the reader to understand the theme of the novel through the description of water. However, from archetypal perspective, water contains different meaning. Therefore, this research is worth doing.

Second, a research from Nidhi Khatana, an article entitled “Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: Rediscovering History”. She discusses that *Beloved* shows that the history influences the event in the future. In her article she argues that “*Beloved* negotiates history as a narrative of the ownership of the most concrete fact of human existence as well as the most abstract of human relationships. It is a history and a representation of the complexities of love and sexual attraction. It foregrounds the dialogic tendencies of memory and its imaginative capacity to construct and reconstruct the significance of the past.” (Khatana 2013: 104-107). This article helps to understand Sethe’s history as a slave and how the self-purification process is built according to her past.

Third, a research that is conducted by Lindsay Green, an article entitled “Foregrounding Motherhood in Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon* and *Beloved*”. In her article, Green focuses on the women characters and the importance of a motherhood portrait. She compares the women in *Song of Solomon*, Pilate and Ruth and Sethe in *Beloved*. She argues that those three characters are suffered from motherless experiences and how it influences their life in the future, especially for Sethe who even kills her own daughter in order to protect her from slavery. Green states that “Because these women are without mothers -Ruth, Pilate, Sethe- the reader cannot help but notice that maternal absence shapes the way they behave” (Green 2001: 37-54). It helps in understanding the importance of motherhood figure since one of the archetypal symbols in this research is related to mother figure.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

This research is developed by using the Archetypal criticism perspective. In his book, Guerin explains that Archetype is “similar motifs or themes may be found among many different mythologies, and certain images that recur in the myths of peoples widely of the message separated in time and place tend to have a common meaning or, more accurately, tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions” (Guerin et al 184).

1.7.1 Archetypal Images

M.H Abrams in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms* states that “...the archetypal images buried in the racial memory, and so succeeds in revitalizing aspects of the psyche which are essential both to individual self-integration and to

the mental and emotional well-being of the human race.” (Abrams 251). This archetypal images come from the human experiences from their unconscious thought and then it is showed in myth, dreams and literary works.

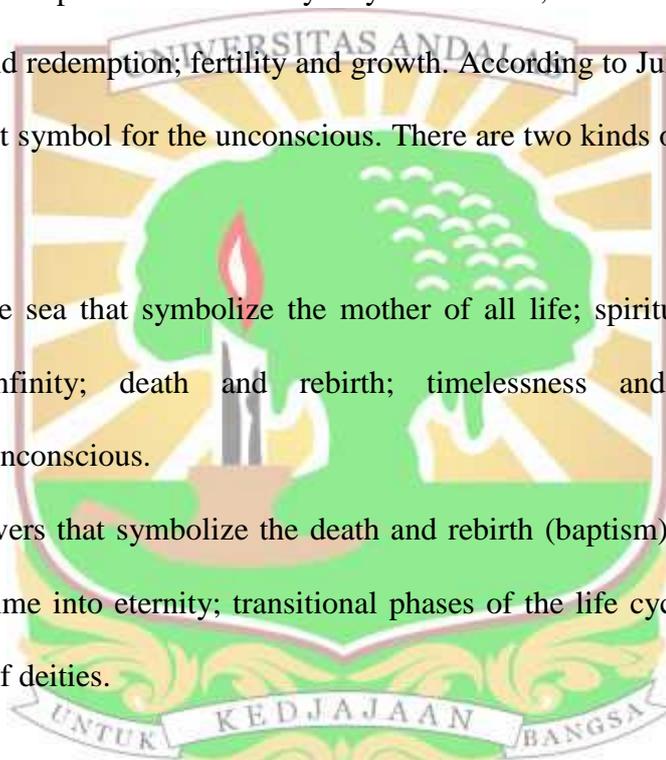
These are the archetypal images according to *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature* by Guerin (2005):

1. Water is an implication of the mystery of creation; birth-death-resurrection; purification and redemption; fertility and growth. According to Jung, water is also the commonest symbol for the unconscious. There are two kinds of water that can be found.

- a. The sea that symbolize the mother of all life; spiritual mystery and infinity; death and rebirth; timelessness and eternity; the unconscious.
- b. Rivers that symbolize the death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle; incarnations of deities.

2. Sun (fire and sky are closely related) which symbolizes the creative energy; law in nature; consciousness (thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision); father principle (moon and earth tend to be associated with female or mother principle); passage of time and life. There are two commonly sun in archetypal images:

- a. Rising sun which symbolizes birth, creation, and enlightenment.



- b. Setting sun which symbolizes death.

3. Colours

- a. Red is the symbol of blood, sacrifice, violent passion and disorder.
- b. Green symbolizes growth, sensation, hope, fertility; in negative context it may be associated with death and decay.
- c. Blue usually implicates the highly positive, associated with truth, religious feeling, security, spiritual purity (the color of the Great Mother or Holy Mother)
- d. Black (darkness) symbolizes chaos, mystery, the unknown; death; primal wisdom; the unconscious; evil; melancholy.
- e. White symbolizes highly multivalent, signifying, in its positive aspects, light, purity, innocence, and timelessness; in its negative aspects, death, terror, the supernatural, and the blinding truth of an inscrutable cosmic mystery.

4. Numbers:

- Four is commonly associated with the circle, life cycle, four seasons; female principle, earth, nature; four elements (earth, air, fire, water)

5. The archetypal woman (Great Mother - the mysteries of life, death, transformation); the female principle associated with the moon):

- The Good Mother (positive aspects of the Earth Mother) is associated with the life principle, birth, warmth, nourishment, protection, fertility, growth and abundance (for example, Demeter and Ceres).

6. The Wise Old Man

He (saviour, redeemer, guru) is the personification of the spiritual principle, representing "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help. The old man always appears when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea." (Guerin et al 188)

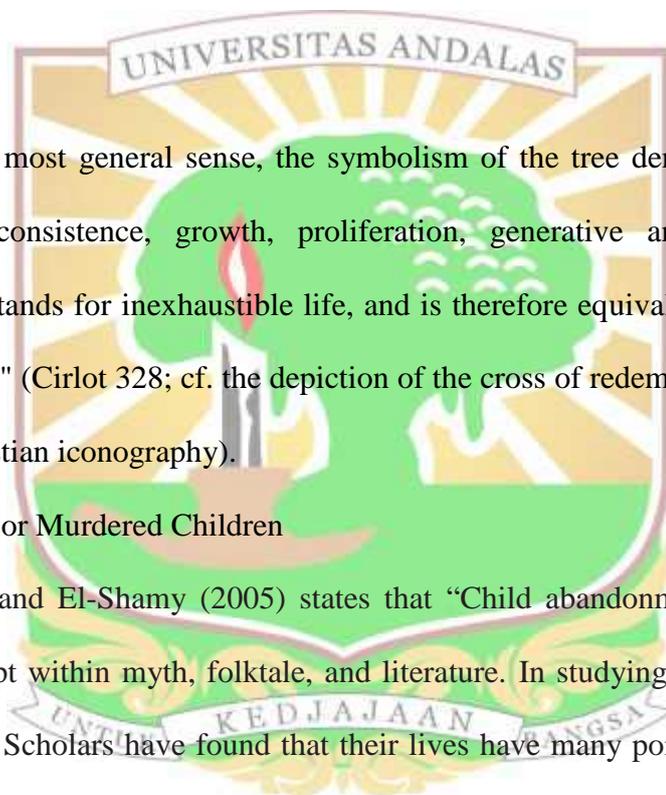
7. Tree

"In its most general sense, the symbolism of the tree denotes life of the cosmos: its consistence, growth, proliferation, generative and regenerative processes. It stands for inexhaustible life, and is therefore equivalent to a symbol of immortality" (Cirlot 328; cf. the depiction of the cross of redemption as the tree of life in Christian iconography).

8. Abandoned or Murdered Children

Garry and El-Shamy (2005) states that "Child abandonment is a many-faceted concept within myth, folktale, and literature. In studying heroes in myth and literature, Scholars have found that their lives have many points in common, including, in their infancy, abandonment or attempted murder by the father (Garry & El-Shamy 404).

There are several motivations for abandoning a child. The motivations include exposing a child to avoid the fulfilment of a prophecy; children are killed as a sacrifice, the fear of social censure, and the acts of revenge. Abandonment is



often associated with fear, jealousy, or dislike of the child or with deep poverty and looming hunger or the potential death of the adults in the family.

Instead of being a potential joy, children in stories of abandonment or murder are problems or impediments for their guardians. Hunger and poverty, miseries in themselves, and superstitions can lead to abuse of the child. Children's fates are often tied to the fates and situations of their mothers, broader needs for political power, and fear of prophecies of the burgeoning power of the child (2005: 408).

1.8 The Method of the Research

In conducting this research, there are three steps which have to be followed. The first step is collecting data using library and internet research. The research is started by exploring the concept which related to the object of the research, *Beloved*, and the theory that will be used, archetypal analysis. The novel *Beloved* uses as the primary source while journals, thesis and literary theory books use as the secondary source.

The second step is analyzing data. The method of analyzing data is descriptive analysis. Fraenkel and Wallen said that "descriptive method is a method used to explain, analyze, and classify something through various techniques..." (1993: 23). The analysis is started by analyzing the intrinsic elements and further analysis is applied to the fictitious characters of the novel. Firstly, the archetypal symbols involved in the journey to self-purification are identified. They are water, colours, the archetypal woman, the wise old man, the

tree and the abandoned or murdered children. Secondly, explaining the meaning of each symbol and how they give meaning to the main character's journey to self-purification.

The last step is presenting the result of data analysis. At this point, the analysis comes to several points. The data is presented using descriptive method, since the research is a qualitative research. Fraenkel and Wallen said that "descriptive method is a method used to explain, analyze, and classify something through various techniques..." (1993: 23).

